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ABSTRACT

A study investigating the relationship between motivation, study time, and student achievement in second language courses has as subjects 97 tenth- and eleventh-grade English speakers in introductory French, German, and Spanish courses. Two surveys measured motivational factors and the amount of time spent studying the second language. Motivation was measured with a scale on which students estimated how much they learned of a specific language skill if they devoted a reasonable amount of time to it. Study time was measured by the number of hours spent in voluntary non-classroom study. Achievement was measured by the final language course grade. Results showed a positive correlation between study time and achievement for the students of French and German, but a negative correlation between motivation and achievement. Correlations between motivation and study were more uniform, and were positive and significant for all groups, although for the Spanish group the degree of correlation was much lower. These results correspond to those found in some other studies. It is proposed that students' reasons for taking the language course or stereotypes about the ease of learning the language might confound the results, and languages may have varying requirements for student achievement. (MSE)

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Study Time, Motivation and Students' Achievement

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Biographical Statement

Dr. Youssef is Assistant Professor of Education at Wayne State University. She received her Ph.D. from The Pennsylvania State University. She has published and presented several articles on motivation, time, language policy, foreign language curriculum, attitude, cultural bias in standardized tests and the effects of instruction on students' achievement.

ABSTRACT

The effects of time on second language learning has been the focus of extensive research in the past decade. Two different time components have been discussed--instructional time and non-classroom study time. While instructional time has been in the forefront of research efforts, the effects of study time on students' motivation and achievement has recently become a topic of equal interest among educators.

This paper presents the findings of a study which attempted to investigate the relationship between motivation, study time and students' achievement of second language courses. Results show that there is a significant correlation between study time, and achievement for students learning French and German. However, for students learning Spanish the opposite occurred. Results between motivation and study time were uniform among the three groups.

INTRODUCTION

The developing interest in second language (L_2) learning in the past decade was parallel by an increased interest in factors which affect students learning gains. Among the well researched factors was time and its relationship to students' achievement. The majority of the studies, however, only concentrated on one concept of time--namely instructional or in-class time. But there is a second concept of time which seems to affect students' levels of achievement in L_2 classes--that is voluntary study or practice time.

The purpose of this paper is to briefly review the available literature, and to present the findings of a study on the effects of non-instructional study time on students' achievement in L_2 classrooms. Relationships among study time, achievement and motivational variables were also investigated.

TIME as a SOURCE of ACHIEVEMENT

In the mid 1970's the effects of instructional time on students' achievement in L_2 classes was the subject of extensive research in Canada. Three separate sets of studies concluded that students' achievement was directly related to hours of instruction (Swain, 1981). As a result of these

findings, the Ontario Ministry of Education issued a policy statement in 1977, recognizing the direct correlation between instructional time and achievement in French-as-a-second language.

In 1979, a study by Cummings suggested that there where actually two components of second language proficiency --cognitive academic linguistic proficiency (CALP) and basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) (Swain, 1981). While a student's BIC were generally believed to benefit only from direct exposure to the language in communicative situations, Cummings showed that "cumulative gains" in student's L_2 CALF could result from continued instruction in their native language. The reason according to Cummings is that for older students, cognitive academic skills (reading, writing) were easily transferred from the students' native language to their second language. Thus, the expectations that L_2 cognitive and communicative proficiency was directly related to the hours of instruction in L_2 does not hold true for older students.

Cummings' distinction between CALP and BICS raises an important question concerning instructional time in learning a second language: When should L_2 instruction

concern itself with the development of both academic and communicative skills, and when, if at all, can it concentrate solely on the development of instructional time towards the development of these two sets of skills depends on the language context surrounding the classroom. If the target language is the majority language of the surrounding community, then the students will naturally acquire the communicative skills through exposure to the people around them. Instruction time can then be devoted to the learning of more academic skills. If, however, the L_2 is not widely used in the surrounding community, then second language instruction must stress both academic and communicative skills and should provide ample opportunities to engage in both.

Unlike the effect of instruction time, non-classroom study or practice time has been investigated and defined differently by authors. For the purpose of this paper, study time is defined as voluntary planned time spent by students studying or practicing L_2 activities outside the classroom in order to increase their second language learning.

It would seem logical, then, to assume that second language learners who assign more time studying or practicing L_2 activities acquire more proficiency than

those who do not. Rubin (1975:43) identified those variables involved in language learning--aptitude, motivation, and opportunity. In reference to her third variable, Rubin states that good language learners "take and create opportunities to practice what they have learned while poor language learners passively do what is assigned to them". Rubin stresses the importance of practice as the only way to "process" the instructional input.

MacNamara (1979) implies the need for extra-curricular practice in learning a second language when he states that a skilled performer of a second language must hold all rules and structures in an implicit form. He emphasizes the importance of seeking out increased exposure in which communication in the target language is necessary. As this type of exposure increases, according to MacNamara, the rules which the learner originally had in explicit form become internalized.

These assumptions were empirically evaluated by several authors. Among them was Hamayan et al. (1977). She sought to isolate the factors accounting for the variance in second language learning among three groups of seventh graders. The three groups differed in the total number of hours of French instruction they had

during their first six years of schooling. The first group had been in an Early Immersion Program (EIF)) since kindergarten and had received instruction only in French through the sixth grade. Their seventh grade instruction was composed of 60% English and 50% French. Group two participated in a Late Immersion Program (LIP). These students received instruction in English through the sixth grade, with one period per day of French-as-a-second language (FSL). In the seventh grade, all of their classes were conducted in French except for English language arts. The third group received instruction from kindergarten though the seventh grade entirely in English, with one period per day of FSL. Each student was given the Junior-Senior High School Personality Questionnaire (HSPQ) and the Language Background Questionnaire (LBQ). The HSPQ was to assess personality factors that might affect L_2 leaning and the LBQ was to measure the extent of the students' exposure to French in their surroundings.

After regression analysis, it was found that seven factors accounted for approximately 50% of the variance in achievement. Four of the factors dealt with personality traits, while the remaining three are related to voluntary use of, or exposure to, French in

a non-classroom setting. These three factors are: 1) the use of French with strangers, 2) the use of English with acquaintances, and 3) the frequency of listening to the radio in French and English.

While the three groups were affected differently by different factors, one factor did emerge as a significant predictor of achievement in all three groups--the use of English with acquaintances. There was a significant negative correlation between the use of English with acquaintances and general achievement in French. The use of French with strangers was also significantly correlated with general achievement for the EC students, but not for the EI nor the LI groups. A possible explanation for this selective effect is that the EC students had limited exposure to French in settings that would challenge their interpersonal skills; therefore any extra exposure in communicative contexts would benefit them. The other students were already receiving ample exposure to French in a variety of settings as a part of the immersion program. Thus, whatever extra French they could use with strangers was found to correlate significantly with oral production proficiency for all three groups.

Two conclusions are drawn by Hamayan and her colleagues concerning the effects of voluntary practice on L_2 learning. One, that there are significant benefits which can be derived from practicing the target language, whenever possible, no matter what the nature of the student group may be. Two, that "active extra-curricular participation may be particularly important in the case of students enrolled in traditional second language programs", (p. 238).

Another study by Bialystok (1981) investigated the effects of three learning strategies--monitoring, inferring, and practice, on second language learners' proficiency. The author suggested that formal practice activities, which concentrate solely on the leaning of structures and rules without giving adequate attention to content, have little effect on second language proficiency.

These studies suggest that second language programs must emphasis greater exposure to second language in a variety of meaningful social contexts in order for cognitive and communication skills to develop.

THE PROBLEM

Although these studies offer valuable guidelines for teachers, program and textbook designers, we are,

however, left with several puzzling questions. Among them: 1) what effect, if any, does the planned time, which the learner spends voluntarily without supervision, have on his/her proficiency? 2) How does motivation to study affect the amount of study time engaged by the learner? In other words, does motivation to learn a second language increase L_2 achievement, or high motivation increases voluntary practice, which inturn leads to greater proficiency in second language learning? This study was conducted to offer insights in helping understand the above questions.

THE STUDY

The subjects of this study were 97 students in the tenth and eleventh grade--48 females and 49 males. They were enrolled in introductory second language classes in Farmington School District, Michigan, for the Winter, 1984. All the students were native English speakers and were learning French, German and Spanish for the first time.

Two separate surveys were used to measure motivational factors and the amount of time spent in studying the second language. To measure motivation a simple scale (1-5) was used, (Appendix B). On the

scale students were given several different areas of second language activities, (e.g. oral practice, studying vocabulary, etc.). Students were asked whether they felt they would satisfactorily achieve these skills if they put forth a reasonable amount of time. The possible responses ranged from "definitely not" to "most definitely".

The study time engaged by students was measured by a scale which asked them to indicate how many hours a week they had spend not in class-studying the second language.

Achievement in the second language was measured by the final grades in the introductory L_2 course. The hypotheses were: 1) that both motivational factors and the amount of non-classroom study time would yield significant positive correlations with achievement, and 2) that there would be a significant positive correlation between motivation and study time.

RESULTS

The results of regression analysis were quite interesting. For both the French I and German I groups, a significant positive correlation was found between study time and achievement ($r = .36$ and $.56$, $p < .05$ respectively). But for the studerts in Spanish I,

the opposite occurred--a significant negative correlation resulted ($r = -.10$; p .05). In measuring the correlation between motivation and achievement, similar results were found. A significant positive correlation resulted for the students in both German I and French I ($r = .43$ and .32 respectively), yet, for the Spanish I group there resulted a significant negative correlation ($r = -.16$).

The resulting correlations between motivation and study time were more uniform. For the students in all three language groups, a significant positive correlation was found. Although the Spanish I group reacted similarly to the other two groups on this measure, the positive correlation yielded was only half as high ($r = .65$, .68 and .34).

DISCUSSION

The study results suggest several interesting findings which have surfaced in similar studies. That is, for a good many second language students learning specific second languages, such as French and German, motivation and study time do have a positive effect on their achievement. However, for some students learning other languages, such as Spanish, both motivation and study time did not help them achieve as well as other students. This may be explained by the fact that

students in the Spanish course might have felt that Spanish is an easy language, therefore, they were not motivated and they did not spend much time studying the language. This could account for the negative correlation between motivation, study time and achievement. In addition, it might also suggest that not all students involved in the study had the same reasons for taking the course. Therefore, some students were motivated, studied hard and achieved higher levels, while others did not. It will be important for future research to try tc use an academic situation where such reasons might not mask potential relationships between motivation, study time and student's achievement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The criteria for using French, German and Spanish as the languages in the study was simply that they represent the most popular offerings on the typical second language programs. However, it may be possible that the learning of Russian, Portuguese or other languages may have significantly different study time and motivational requirements. Thus, the extent to which other languages differ in what students have to do to satisfactorily achieve in second language courses may limit the results from the present study.

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Table 1

Breakdown of Sample Size by Language

Characteristics	French	German	Spanish	Total
#Classes	1	1	1	3
Total N	27	32	38	97
Males	14	17	18	49
Females	13	15	20	48

Table 2

Intercorrelations of Study Time: Motivational Measures and Students' Achievement Per Language

Language	Study Time	Motivational Scale	Achievement
French	1.00	.65	.36
		1.00	.32
German	1.00	.68	.56
		1.00	.43
Spanish	1.00	.34	-.10
		1.00	-.16

Correlation significantly different from 0 at .05 level or less.

Appendix A

BACKGROUND DATA

NAME:

AGE:

SEX: M_____ F_____

GRADE LEVEL:

NATIVE LANGUAGE:

SECOND LANGUAGE

Have you studied a second language before?:

Yes_____ No_____

Appendix B

Motivational Scale

Please indicate for each of the following whether, if you expend a reasonable amount of effort, that you felt you will be able to achieve each of the following skills satisfactorily.

Task: If I put forth a reasonable amount of effort I will be able to acquire the skills satisfactorily.

	(1) DN	(2) PN	(3) NS	(4) FS	(5) MD
1. Study Vocabulary					
2. Oral Practice					
3. Listening Comprehension					
4. Reading Comprehension					
5. Grammar					
6. Translation					

DN=Definitely Not; PN=Probably Not; NS=Not Sure; FS=Fairly Sure; MD=Most Definitely

Appendix C

STUDYING TIME

1. Please estimate, as best you can, approximately how many totalhours, per week, you spent for this second language course. Do not include class time.)

Check One

0- 2 _____

2- 4 _____

4- 6 _____

6- 8 _____

8-10 _____

10-11 _____

12-14 _____

14 or more _____

2. On the average, how many days (out of 7) per week did you devote at least some organized study time for this second language course? Indicate the typical days you would have studied.

Sunday _____

Monday _____

Tuesday _____

Wednesday _____

Thursday _____

Friday _____

Saturday _____